DECEMBER 2001

TRANSREPORT

TRANSPORTATION NEWS FROM THE BOSTON METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Aquarium Station Reopens on the MBTA's Blue Line

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) reopened Aquarium Station on October 29. The Blue Line subway station had been closed for the past year. The renovated facility features a longer platform that makes possible the use of six-car trainsets. The old station was only able to accommodate four-car trainsets.

Currently, the station can be accessed only from a new headhouse on the west side of the Central Artery at the intersection of State Street and McKinley Square. The headhouse includes an elevator. A second west-side entrance is nearing completion and will open soon. It is located on the other side of State Street, adjacent to Marketplace Center and Faneuil Hall Marketplace. The new west-side entrances improve access to both the Faneuil Hall area and the Financial District. The old headhouse located adjacent to the Marriott Long Wharf Hotel, as well as another new headhouse on the east side of the Central Artery, will open in 2003.

A Blue Line train enters the reopened Aquarium Station

Completely closing the station for a year allowed the modernization work to proceed more quickly: the project can now be completed a year ahead of the original 2004 scheduled completion date. In 2003 the MBTA will start to operate six-car trainsets on the Blue Line. The $172 million purchase of 94 new Blue Line cars from Siemens Transportation Systems, which was authorized by the MBTA board of directors in October, will provide the rolling stock required for the operation of longer trains.

Updated Big Dig Exhibit Debuts; Tunnel Construction Delayed

The Museum of Science and the Central Artery/Tunnel Project have reopened an exhibit on the Big Dig. Originally opened in 1993, it has been renovated and now includes interactive hands-on displays.

One of the main features of the exhibit is a model of the Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge accompanied by a display providing a closer look at the cables that make the bridge a unique landmark. Located at the Museum of Science, the exhibit is funded through a grant from the Federal Highway Administration and contributions from private companies working on the CA/T project.

The Big Dig is the largest, most technically challenging highway project in American history. A current unexpected challenge is a persistent water leak at Fort Point Channel between the I-90 connection and the Ted Williams Tunnel. The leak was discovered in June at the entrance pit of the eastbound side of the connection. A 14-inch space between the bottom of the tunnel box and a concrete base slab has been estimated to be allowing approximately 25,000 gallons per minute to pass through. To fix the leak, engineers are drilling approximately 80 holes through the five-foot-thick concrete floor. Through these holes, workers will inject expandable grout that will fill the 14-inch space permanently.

■ Big Dig *cont. on p. 4*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

MPO activities update 2
Transportation Plan workshops 2
New Logan Airport roadways 3
Arborway trolleys to return 3
Fairmount Line study 4
Meeting calendar 4

The members of the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO): Executive Office of Transportation and Construction • City of Boston • City of Everett • City of Newton • City of Peabody • Federal Highway Administration • Federal Transit Administration • Joint Regional Transportation Committee • Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority • Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board • Massachusetts Highway Department • Massachusetts Port Authority • Massachusetts Turnpike Authority • Metropolitan Area Planning Council • Town of Bedford • Town of Framingham • Town of Hopkinton

Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization Activities

Sub-Signatory Committee Update

A committee made up of representatives of all MPO members met several times in November to develop a revised Boston MPO Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU, which will replace a 1997 agreement, was required by the Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations in their recertification report of March 15. Consensus on the new MOU was reached on November 15; a committee is preparing the final document for approval and signing in December.

The SSC also met to discuss the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan Update, another requirement of the March recertification report. MPO staff presented additional information to help the SSC define a package of projects that will be analyzed using travel models. After analyzing all the model results and other information, the SSC will recommend a set of projects for the Plan Update. The draft Plan Update will be circulated for a 35-day public review and comment period beginning in late January.

JRTC Update

The Joint Regional Transportation Committee's subcommittee on the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan Update is reviewing materials developed for the Plan and preparing for discussion with the full JRTC at the December meeting. The JRTC will submit its comments on the Plan to the MPO. The JRTC has organized committees to plan programs and specialize in other MPO documents. It is forming another to update its bylaws. The JRTC is also considering ways to facilitate member and citizen participation. Other JRTC activity in the past month included extending membership to the town of Weymouth.

AACT Update

At its November 20 meeting, the Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT) was given a presentation by the MBTA on the 30 percent–design work for modernization of Savin Hill Station on the Red Line. One aspect of the modernization is making the station accessible; this includes an elevator from street level to the platform. Work on the station is scheduled to be complete in late summer 2003.

MBTA to Hold Meetings for Fairmount Line Commuter Rail Upgrade Study

The MBTA is developing a plan for possible service improvements on the Fairmount commuter rail line and would like your opinions and input. The Fairmount Line operates in Boston and Milton, with stations at Uphams Corner in Dorchester, Morton Street in Mattapan, and Fairmount and Readville in Hyde Park.

The Fairmount Line Commuter Rail Upgrade Study will explore several options for improving service along this right-of-way. Two improvements that are being examined are the construction of new stations and an increase in service frequency. The line crosses several high-volume streets in Boston, including Massachusetts Avenue, Columbia Road, and Blue Hill Avenue. New stations at these locations, as well as others, are some of the suggestions the MBTA has already received. An increase in service frequency is viewed as a way to increase ridership. Currently, trains run once an hour during the off peak and not on weekends.

The first meeting to discuss the study was held on November 29 in Hyde Park. Additional meetings are scheduled for December 10 in Dorchester and December 18 in Mattapan; see the meeting calendar to the left. For more information concerning the study, call Yawa Duse-Anthony at 1-800-556-7245.

MPO Workshops Provide Forum for Discussion of the Transportation Plan

Work on the Transportation Plan Update for the Boston Region continues in preparation for submitting a final document to the federal transportation agencies by March 15, 2002. The latest efforts included public-outreach workshops held at various locations throughout the region and continued coordination with the Joint Regional Transportation Committee (the MPO's public advisory board) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council subregional groups.

These efforts have included distributing information on policies for selecting projects to be recommended in the Plan, on alternative project sets being tested using the regional transportation model, and on the universe of potential projects. The list of potential projects includes ones that have been previously studied, are currently under study, or are in development, as well as projects that were proposed in comments received during the public-outreach efforts for the Plan adopted in January 2001. The public has been asked to comment on and add to this list, indicating what the region's priorities should be over the next 20 to 25 years. The list may be downloaded from the Boston MPO Web site at www.ctps.org/bostonmpo.plan2000/plan. To request that a copy be mailed, call Anne McGahan at (617) 973-7100.

The comments received by the public will be used by the MPO in selecting the set of projects to be included in the Plan. The proposed schedule is for the MPO to release a draft of the Plan Update in January 2002 for a 35-day public review period, which will be the next opportunity for public input into the Plan process.

New Logan Airport Roadway System Opens; Other Massport News

The first segment of Logan Airport's two-level roadway system opened to motorists on November 11. The purpose of the two-level system, which the Massachusetts Port Authority and the Central Artery Project began to build in 1996, is to provide separate routes for vehicles destined for terminal departure areas and vehicles destined for arrival areas. When the project is completed, vehicles accessing departure areas will use the upper roadway, while those headed for the arrival areas will use the lower roadway. The Central Parking area will be accessible from the lower roadway only.

The segment that Massport opened in November, an upper roadway, is for vehicles entering the airport and heading to the departure areas of Terminals B, C, and E. The Terminal A and D departure areas are still only accessible from the lower roadway. Part of the project involves the construction of an upper roadway for vehicles departing Logan after leaving a departure area. This segment has yet to be built, so all vehicles departing the airport will continue to use the lower roadway.

Two immediate benefits accrue from the opening of the first segment of the upper roadway. Work can now begin on the direct connection from the Ted Williams Tunnel to Route 1A. A sharp turn on the existing inbound roadway can now be eliminated as well.

In other Massport news, new Logan Airport parking rates that were approved by the Massport board of directors in October went into effect on November 12. The daily rate at Central Parking is now $22 and the weekly rate is capped at $99. The weekly rate is only available until satellite parking lots reopen, at which time weekly rates will be offered at those economy lots only. The short-term rates at Central Parking have been lowered. In consideration of the new restrictions on curbside parking, the first half hour at Central Parking has been reduced from $4 to $2. The parking rates at all Logan Express facilities remain unchanged.

On the Tobin Bridge, Massport has opened a second dedicated Fast Lane tollbooth. The new Fast Lane facility, which opened on November 9, is located to the left of the existing Fast Lane booth. For more information on Logan Airport, the Tobin Bridge, or other Massport facilities, visit the Massport Web site at www.massport.com.

MBTA to Restore Trolley Service to Jamaica Plain

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) issued a determination on November 7 requiring the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to restore trolley service to the Jamaica Plain section of Boston. Service was discontinued in 1985 on the two-mile stretch of the Green Line's E branch between Heath Street and the Arborway. In 1990, the commonwealth committed to the restoration of the service as part of a package of transit projects to mitigate the environmental impact of the Central Artery project.

E Line service in Jamaica Plain, discontinued in 1985

Concerns over certain new design standards' ramifications for restoration of streetcar service in the portions of the corridor that are only 40 feet wide led the MBTA to explore the use of long, articulated buses in the corridor in place of trolleys. Advantages of this alternative would have included an implementation cost $25 million less than that of the light rail option, and extension of the route of the service beyond the current terminus at Copley Square to Park Street Station via Boylston, Charles, and Beacon streets in downtown Boston.

Despite the complications involved in the restoration of trolley service, the DEP ruled it to be feasible. The MBTA will submit a timetable by the end of the year for completion of the project. Parking, pedestrian, and curb impacts suggest that the MBTA and the city of Boston will need to work together to develop an appropriate design. The MBTA projects that the $85 million restoration will take two years for the completion of design work and engineering, and then an additional two years for construction.

The trolley will replace the #39 bus, which the MBTA implemented to replace the trolley service in 1985. The #39 bus is the most heavily used line in the MBTA bus system, carrying about 40 percent more passengers than the next-busiest route.

Meeting Calendar

The public is welcome to attend the following transportation-related meetings this month. A photo ID is usually required for access to meeting locations.

At the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Wednesday, December 5
MBTA Board of Directors — 1:00 P.M.
Conference Room 2/3

Wednesday, December 12
Joint Regional Transportation Committee (JRTC) — 3:00–5:00 P.M.
Conference Room 2/3

Wednesday, December 19
Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT) — 1:30–3:30 P.M.
Conference Room 2/3

Thursday, December 20 (tentative)
Boston MPO Sub-Signatory Committee — 10:00 A.M.
CTPS Conference Room, Suite 2150

At Other Boston-Area Locations

Tuesday, December 4
Massport Public Hearing: Security Regulations for Logan Airport and Hanscom Field — 11:00 A.M.
Media Room
Logan Airport, East Boston

Wednesday, December 5
Program for Mass Transportation, MBTA: Wakefield Area Drop-in Workshop — 7:00 P.M.–9:00 P.M.
Presentation at beginning of workshop
American Civic Center
467 Main Street, Wakefield

Thursday, December 6
MassHighway Public Hearing: Proposed Lowell Street Bridge Replacement — 7:00 P.M.
Somerville City Hall
Aldermanic Chambers
93 Highland Avenue, Somerville

Monday, December 10
MBTA Fairmount Line Service Improvements — 6:00 P.M.
Alexander Magnolia Co-op
36 Alexander Street, Dorchester
Take MBTA route 15 bus from Ruggles or Kane Square, or commuter rail to Uphams Corner Station.

Thursday, December 13
Central Artery Community Meeting (South Boston) — 6:00 P.M.
Children's Museum
300 Congress Street, Boston

Monday, December 17
Central Artery Community Meeting (Chinatown) — 6:00 P.M.
St. James Church
125 Harrison Avenue, Boston

Tuesday, December 18
MBTA Fairmount Line Service Improvements — 5:00 P.M.
Boston Specialty and Rehabilitation Hospital
249 River Street, Mattapan
Take MBTA route 27 bus from Ashmont or Mattapan.

■ Big Dig *cont. from p. 1*

For more information on the Central Artery/Tunnel Project, call the CA/T Public Information Office at (617) 951-6400 or visit www.bigdig.com. For more information on the Museum of Science's Big Dig exhibit, call the museum's general information line at (617) 723-2500 or visit www.mos.org.

TRANSreport

Produced by the Central Transportation Planning Staff

Editors
Scott Hamwey
Mary Ellen Sullivan

Photography
Ken Dumas
Leo Sullivan

Copyediting
Leland N. Morrison

Contributors
Jonathan Church
Anne McGahan
Pam Wolfe

Published by the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization

Kevin J. Sullivan, Chairman
Luisa Paiewonsky, MPO Executive Secretary

TRANSreport is available in accessible formats to people with disabilities. Contact the Central Transportation Planning Staff Certification Activities Group at (617) 973-7119 (voice), (617) 973-7089 (TTY), (617) 973-8855 (fax) or publicinformation@ctps.org (e-mail).

Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization
State Transportation Building
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116

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